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ABSTRACT

Three mothers whose children were connected to Dallas (Texas) gangs told their stories at the Fourth Joint National Conference on Gangs, Schools, and Community. It is said that gang members come from dysfunctional families, usually from homes where fathers are not present or involved in children's upbringing. In spite of a great deal of research and media attention to youth gangs, little is known about the parents of gang members. Many gang members do come from homes where parents are not involved, but many have parents who are loving and hard working and who do all they can to raise their children in safety. The story of a Hispanic American mother, herself a social worker, and the enormous and successful effort she made to wean her son from the gang he had joined illustrate the attraction gangs can have for young people who are heavily influenced by peers. The second story, that of a woman whose only son was killed in a drive-by shooting, tells the efforts she is making to ensure the safety of the granddaughter whose responsibility she has assumed. The third speaker, the mother of a son who joined a skinhead organization and supported the Ku Klux Klan, told about the effort required to change her son's thinking and reestablish the tolerance with which he was raised. (SLD)

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Mothers of Gang Members Give Voice.
-Gweondolyn Cooke and Alan McEvoy

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SCHOOL INTERVENTION REPORT™

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Spring 1997 Safe Schools Coalition, Inc.

Mothers of Gang Members Give Voice*

by Gwendolyn Cooke and Alan McEvoy

Anita, Becky, and Brenda — three mothers whose children were connected to Dallas gangs — related their stories at last year's Fourth Joint National Conference on Gangs, Schools, and Community. This year's conference, organized by SSC and cosponsored by 20 national organizations, will be held on Sept. 25–27, 1997, in Orlando, Florida. More information is on page 8.

When considering youth gangs, society tends to heap blame on the parents of gang members. It is said that gang members come from "dysfunctional" homes where fathers are seldom present or involved in rearing their offspring; that these parents — even if both parents are in the home — are prone to violence and substance abuse, are seldom literate, and do not value education or encourage their children to achieve in school; that they provide no moral guidance to their children, nor monitor what their children do or with whom they associate. And perhaps the greatest indictment is the claim that these parents do not want or love their children.

Are these parents the primary reason why their children become involved in gangs? If we could alter the behaviors of parents, would we see a dramatic reduction in youth gang activity?

Despite a plethora of research and media attention to youth gangs, however, we know very little about the parents we so often denounce. True, many gang members do come from homes that are violent, chaotic, and devoid of nurturing relationships. Many

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come from impoverished homes with single mothers and few resources. But such circumstances do not begin to accurately characterize the home life of many other gang members.

There are gang members whose parents are loving and hard working, and who do all they can to raise their children in safety, in virtue, and in health. Yet, these parents cannot, by themselves, overcome the messages of the gang culture that pervades the neighborhoods and schools. In areas replete with gangs, what goes on outside the home is as important as what happens in the home. At the very least, the stereotype that all gang members come from dysfunctional families constitutes yet another barrier to understanding, making it difficult for educators and human service providers to know how to work effectively with these parents and their children.

Ironically, the one voice that is conspicuously absent from the gang debate is that of the parents. In particular, the mothers of gang members on whose shoulders we place so much blame, are seldom given a chance to tell their story.

In the spring of 1996, at the Joint National Conference on Gangs, Schools, and Community in Dallas, several mothers of gang members were given that opportunity. Each is a remarkable woman whose struggle against the gang culture is a lesson in patience, tenacity, and the power of unconditional love. Each mother violates the stereotype of home life for gang members, and each mother offers us hope in the face of seemingly overwhelming impediments they face. In their own words, the following are the stories of Anita, Brenda, and Becky. (Their remarks have been edited for clarity and length.)

Anita's Story

Family Structure. I have a son who was involved in gangs at the age of 12. It took almost six years to have him change his life around.

When he entered the gang culture, I made it a point to find out why. He was in a parochial school; there were two parents in the home; financially we were fine. We had two other children, and I didn't see why he needed to find that outside avenue, when he had everything he needed at home. I couldn't understand what it was that he was not getting, that he felt he needed to get out of the streets, or out of other children, or out of negative behavior.

I had to get to know my son all over again in a culture that I did not know. There was nobody that could teach me. It wasn't like I could go to the library and get a book or go to a doctor and get some type of reading to find out how to work with my son.

Decision to Act/Modeling. Once I found out he was in a gang, I said, "Well, then, I

need to get to know his friends." So I developed a baseball team, and I invited a lot of his gang members to play. I wanted them to turn the negative into a positive thing on the field, with other children. And so that's how I started to work with him. I got to know where he hung out, where they went to get high. I got to know abandoned buildings, learned to listen to his music and know the gang colors, signs, graffiti, and rival gangs.

Prepared for the Worst. During this time my home was shot at, graffitied, and bombed. My son was stabbed eight times and left for dead. There isn't anything that I haven't gone through with that child, but I wanted to teach him that I was going to help him through it.

It was a real hardship because I had other children, and I was afraid that by focusing so much attention on him, I was going to lose the other ones. So at some point I have to make up my mind how much time I was willing to put into him and still not neglect my other children. It was hard but, as a family, you learn to do things together and take the good with the bad.

And so my other children learned to understand the things that I was going through with my son, and they pitched in. My older son became a coach for the baseball team; my other son became the bat boy, and so together we learned . . . as a family.

Plan of Action. He wasn't doing well in school. His grades were dropping, he was skipping class, and I was constantly at the office. I think I went to his school more than he did.

I had to figure out a way to get him back. I made up my mind that I was not going to go out on the streets and look for him nor go sleepless at night because he didn't come home. I refused to let him turn my home upside down because he had chosen a life that eventually was going to lead to incarceration or to death. When he went out, I'd say, "God bless you, I love you," and hope that God would bring him back to me.

I used to have to explain to others that I wasn't a bad mother because I didn't sit up all night waiting for him by the window or because I didn't go out on the streets and look for him and risk my life — I had other children to care for. You're not a bad mother when you don't do those things. You're a good mother because you're not giving in to it.

Finally, he reached a point when he decided he didn't want to be involved in the gangs anymore. It was very tiring for him. It was a pace that they had to keep up all the

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time. They had the parties, staying up late, drinking, the inhalants . . .

Resolution and Additional Strategies. The only way he knew out was either to take another beating . . . or death. And I said "No, you're going to walk out of it with your head held up high." He looked at me like, "Yeah, you're crazy."

I said, "No, I'm going to teach you how you're going to do this."

Anita: One day after he decided he wanted to get out of the gangs, I came home and found him — he had tried to commit suicide.

One day after he decided he wanted to get out of the gangs, I came home and found him — he had tried to commit suicide.

He was in the hospital for three days. As soon as he got out I placed him in another home, in another area of Dallas and switched schools. It was like going undercover. He took a whole new identity. That was the only way I knew that the gangs couldn't find him.

Family Therapy. He was in therapy. We were all in therapy. It was through the help of psychologists, psychiatrists, medication, and family therapy that I was able to get my son back. In the Latino culture, therapy is not something you go to. You don't have counseling. We believe in going to our aunts, uncles, godparents, or grandparents — that's who our counselors are . . . that's who we trust with our lives.

So, going out of that arena, that's just not something that we usually do. But I knew I needed something more powerful to help my son. I had decided that I was going to challenge the streets and the gangs to get my son back. I wasn't going to let them take away what I had brought into this world.

Prepared for the Worst. The saddest thing was when they left him — when they stabbed him. He had already come out of the gangs for a while, and he had gone to a school party that they were giving for good grades — that year he was graduating. They invited a lot of different kids from the Dallas area . . . someone remembered him.

Gangs don't forget. Gang rivals never forget who you are, where you come from, or who you've been associated with. They stabbed him eight times . . . and left him for dead.

Results. My son is doing very well now. I'm proud of him. He lives back in the neighborhood where all this started and he can walk around with his head held high. This year he will be 21. He is enrolled in college, has a full-time job, and recently received a promotion to supervisor.

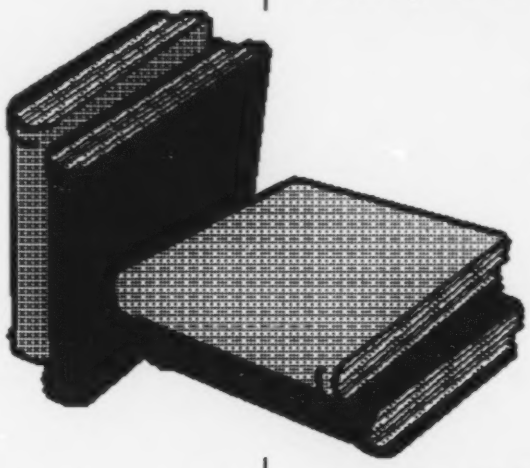
The Second Son. I have another son who is 16. Recently, he was held at gunpoint by a gang. They wanted to steal his jacket and his shoes. He gave the jacket, but he refused to give the shoes he had just received for Christmas. He ran into the neighborhood rec center and got away.

He decided he was going to file charges. He did everything on his own. But when he went to school the next day the young men there told him to keep it on the "down and low," which means you don't tell what you saw.

Intimidation. But when the court date came, all the gang members showed up — just to intimidate us. The room was packed.

"Forget it, drop this," I told my son. "It is not worth it. It is not worth you losing your life. I've been through this once, I cannot go through it again. Let it go. Let them walk."

He got so angry at me, he said, "No, Mom. You always told me to stand up for what's right, and now I'm going to stand up for it. And if it costs me my life, it's because I stood up for it."



I just stood there with my mouth open. "Okay," I said. "If that is what you choose to do, we have come this far, I will support you in it."

Unfortunately, the guy got probation.

So now I have to come up with another plan for this child, one who didn't have anything to do with gangs. As a social worker I'm always telling families in similar situations to press charges, go forward, you know, take charge. I don't know that I can do that anymore. I was lucky, I knew where to go, I knew what to look for, and I knew what I needed for my son. Some mothers aren't that lucky. The only thing that I can say is you have to learn the culture; you have to learn the gang life to be able to work with these children. And this is not a one- or two-year process when you're trying to bring them back. It takes years.

Becky's Story

Family Structure. Back in 1989, my only child, my son, was killed in a drive-by [shooting] at a park. I didn't know anything about gangs at that time.

It really hit me hard because I didn't know my son was in a gang. He went to a private school. He had a father and mother. We were involved in the church. We always picked him up from school. We were always there for him.

You work so hard to raise your children. You stay up at night with them, and you see them take their first steps. And then the gangs come and lure them and take them away from you, and destroy their life and that of the family.

Plan of Action. As a result of my son's death, I had to get involved and get to know some of the gang members that my son was involved with. That was not easy because I had this hatred for gangs. But I felt that it was my obligation to find out what had happened, where I had failed my son, if I had failed my son. Also, I wanted justice for my son . . . .

Because I was pursuing this case, the gang came after me. Four months after my son was killed by two brothers, they killed a young man in West Dallas. It was very hard for me to understand why someone who had killed my son had been released on bond —

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Calendar of Conferences

Safe Schools Coalition, Inc. — along with many other cosponsoring organizations — presents the following schedule of conferences:

Fifth Joint National Conference on Gangs, Schools, and Community

September 25-27, 1997
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, Florida

Seventh International Conference on Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus

October 16-18, 1997
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, Florida

Third Joint National Conference on Transition from School to Work

November 20-22, 1997
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, Florida

Fourth Joint National Conference on Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension, and Dropping Out of School

February 5-7, 1998
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, Florida

For more information or to register call 800-537-4903

why he had been released to kill another individual.

So then I had to get involved with the judicial system, trying to understand it, trying to find out the way it should work, discovering all the loop holes.

Prepared for the Worst. As a result of this other young man getting killed, I got to know his family. They called me one day and wanted to talk. I was hesitant because of the things that were going on with my son's case: Gang members had shot at my house and me; they left messages that if I didn't back off they were going to kill me. They had also stolen my son's headstone from the cemetery and tried to break it.

"Maybe it's a setup, maybe I shouldn't go to meet the other family," I thought.

So I prayed about it. And then I decided I should go. We became close to that family, and it gave us a stronger voice to go to court and to the D.A.'s office.

The Judicial System. So then we went to court — they let the guy out again on probation. We just couldn't understand why this was happening. . . .

As I was going to court I would see a lot of other parents that were going through the same problems. A lot of them didn't know the language, and I would see them sit there all day, and nobody would come and help them.

A lot of these moms were there because their sons were the perpetrators. These mothers' pain was just as real as mine. Even though their sons had committed a crime and taken a life, that was still their son that was going to jail. They also knew that their child had destroyed another family. So I could see their pain, and I had sympathy for those mothers. That is what gave me the idea to start Parents Against Crime and Drugs. . . .

It took almost three years before my case was solved, before I had any kind of peace. Yet still today I have to worry. The prosecutors told me that I need to be careful when he comes out, that I need to follow his case when it goes before the board, because he promised when I was in court that he was gonna get me, that I was gonna go down.

New Responsibilities. I have a little girl that my son left behind. His girlfriend was pregnant, and I'm raising her now. So I have to worry about myself, my safety, and that of my little girl.

All this happened to me because my son made a wrong decision, made a wrong choice. . . . Now I'm having to deal with this pain, this grief. And for the rest of my life I have to worry and watch my back.

I do not know where I failed my son. I don't know what I did wrong that my son chose to get involved in the gangs. So when my little girl asks me, and she's already starting to ask me, "Mom, what happened to my dad?" I say, "Your dad was killed." But I know that I have to get prepared to tell my daughter soon enough, . . . "Your dad, he got killed because he got involved in the gangs."

Self-Evaluation. I'm better prepared for my little girl because of what I have learned about gangs. I also know some of the mistakes that I made with my son. I was so involved with trying to give him the material things that I forgot the most important things — quality time and communication. That is where I failed my son.

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Fifth Joint National Conference on

GANGS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITY

September 25-27, 1997
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, FL

Cosponsors include the U.S. Department of Justice • Boys and Girls Clubs of America • Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups • and 21 other organizations and associations representing community, school, business, law enforcement, and governmental programs.

The plenary and breakout sessions, the "sharing fair," and networking opportunities of the conference will concurrently address school and community intervention programs • reducing the attractiveness of gangs • legal and security issues concerning school and governmental policies • research on gangs • basic prevention programming.

September 24, 1997
Holiday Inn International Drive Resort • Orlando, FL

On Wednesday, September 24, there will be four one-day preconference workshops sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Nat'l Education Assn.: Hate Crimes in a Gang Context • Information Sharing for Community Agencies • Exemplar Programs for Making Schools Safe • Alternative Schooling for Disruptive Students.

☎ 800-537-4903 for Registration Information

It's too late for me to help my son, but not too late to help others — to help other parents, children, and my little girl.

Brenda's Story

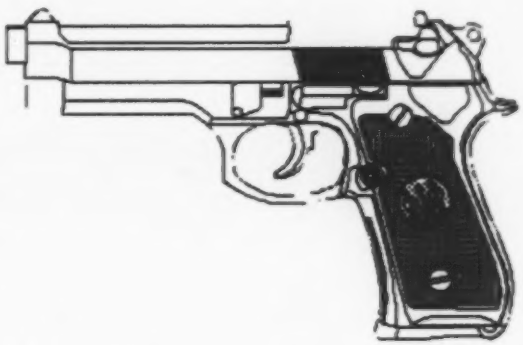
Social Justice Commitment. I grew up in the South in the early '60s, when the civil rights movement was just beginning. As a freshman in high school I saw, firsthand, prejudice directed against a black woman by authorities. It so upset me that I decided from that moment on I would fight prejudice wherever it lies. That became a real life-changing decision for me — at the age of 15. [Brenda has since spent time involved in social justice issues including working with the homeless. She would often include her family in the related activities — which makes the following story about her son all the more shocking.]

Early Signs. When my son was 13, he came running out the door with a Mohawk haircut. I just about went through the ceiling. And so we had a "hair-style crisis" going on for the next year. He wanted to have his hair shaved up the side, and I said, "No." I thought I had won because he began to let it grow. And then one day, the wind blew. He had it shaved all the way up, but he had it growing down long so it looked like he didn't have shaved sides — it finally hit me that his boots, jeans, suspenders, and haircut were a symbol of prejudice against other people. I was stunned beyond belief, because everything we had done had been to encourage the love of other people and the embrace of other cultures.

Setting Limits Contract. He was getting ready to walk out the door, and I said, "You can't go out; we've got to talk. I just realized what this uniform means. Chad, you can't leave this house dressed like this."

"Mom, I am leaving this house," he said.

"No you are not," I said. "You cannot represent our family and this home dressed like this."



"What do you mean? It's just clothes."

"You know what I mean," I answered. "I've just realized what the combat boots are all about. I've just realized why you want your head shaved. You can't do this anymore."

"Well, I'm going to," he said.

He insisted on leaving. "Chad, if you leave this house dressed like this, you can't come back until you have made a decision to change," I said. "Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Yes, I understand," he answered.

I wrote it out and I made him sign that he understood what I was saying. Then, he left.

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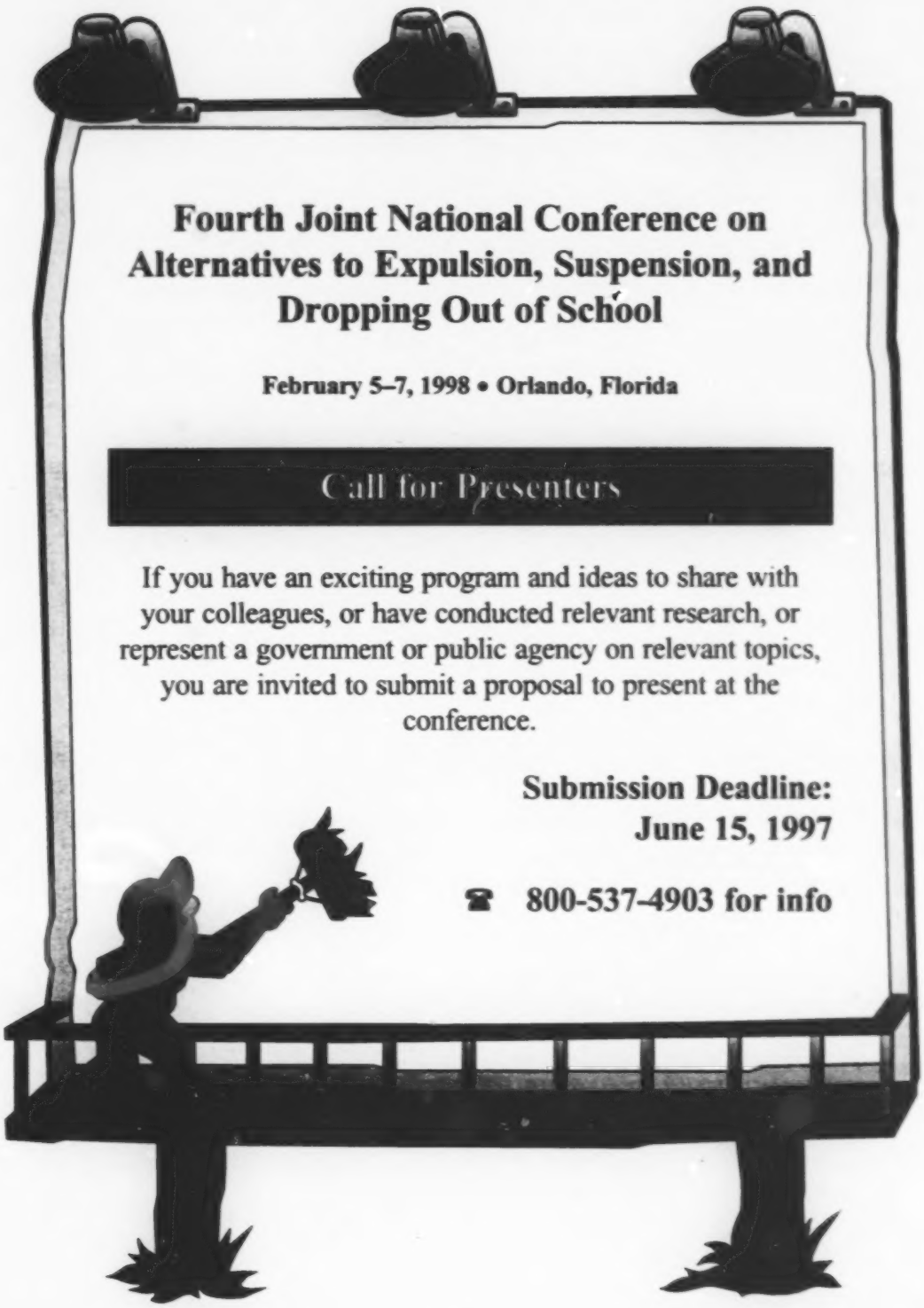

Fourth Joint National Conference on Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension, and Dropping Out of School

February 5–7, 1998 • Orlando, Florida

Call for Presenters

If you have an exciting program and ideas to share with your colleagues, or have conducted relevant research, or represent a government or public agency on relevant topics, you are invited to submit a proposal to present at the conference.

Submission Deadline: June 15, 1997

☎ **800-537-4903 for info**

I didn't hear from him for 10 days. I didn't know where he was. He finally called about midnight one night. It was cold and he asked, "Mom, can I come home?"

"Only on the terms that I told you," I replied. "Are you willing to let go of your boots and your suspenders?" He agreed.

I picked him up and he changed for a while. I learned later that he took his clothes and boots elsewhere. When he would leave the house he'd just go and put them on. This began a period of several years during which we would have these confrontations, he would make some changes, and then he would slide back.

Prepared for the Worst. He said he was going camping with some friends. It all seemed on the up and up, but I had a feeling it wasn't. I turned on the news that evening and, sure enough, the local news reported that there was a Klan rally in Stevenville — I knew that that's where Chad was going. Later, I saw that two of the local news stations had pictures of Chad marching, with head shaved, fist held high, and a Confederate flag in hand.

This pattern went on. . . .

Once, we had a Hispanic gang come to our door in broad daylight looking for Chad. By the time I got to the front door, they had gone to the back of the house. I went after them to the back of the house. Others kids in the neighborhood had seen them, had seen the guns, and had called the police. I never did see them. . . .

Much later, when Chad was 16, he had called the police because there was an altercation out front with a gang. There were guns involved. We were sitting around talking about what Chad needed to do to get out of this situation when a neighbor came driving up the street. He screeched to a stop in front of our house and yelled, "They're back, and they are coming up the street with sawed-off shotguns." He jumped in the car and tore around the corner.

Brenda: I turned on the news that evening and, sure enough, the local news reported that there was a Klan rally in Stevenville — I knew that that's where Chad was going. Later, I saw that two of the local news stations had pictures of Chad marching, with head shaved, fist held high, and a Confederate flag in hand.

We turned the lights out, locked the doors, and called the police. My daughter went to the center bathroom — where there is the most protection from bullets, and I was on the floor in the kitchen calling the police. The gang wound up in our backyard, but they evidently saw the police coming and left before the police got there.

On another occasion my daughter brought a friend home from college. At three o'clock that morning, someone pulled up in a car and shot at the house six times, missed the house but hit her car four times.

Over the course of time, Chad got arrested and sent to the county jail — a place no skinhead wants to go. "God," I prayed. "I put my son in your hands and you do whatever you have to do to put Chad back to where you want him to be."

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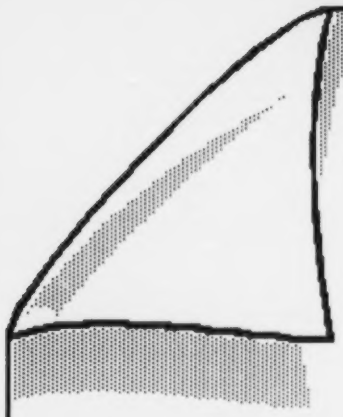

Call for Papers

More than 28 national organizations — including the Boys and Girls Clubs of America • United Neighborhood Centers of America • ASPIRA • Nat'l Urban League • Nat'l Assn. of Secondary School Principals • Nat'l Education Assn. • Assn. for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups • the U.S. Depts. of Labor, Education, and Justice • and other associations — gather together to address one general problem at a time.

If you have an exciting program and ideas to help your colleagues, or you have conducted relevant research, or represent a government or pubiic agency on the conference topics, you are invited to submit proposals to present at one or more of the following conferences.

- **Third Joint National Conference on Transition from School to Work,** November 20–22, 1997, Orlando, FL. **Deadline** for proposals is April 30, 1997.
- **Fourth Joint National Conference on Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension, and Dropping Out of School,** February 5–7, 1998, Orlando, FL. **Deadline** for proposals is June 15, 1997.
- **Joint National Conference on Student Health Issues: Developing School, Community, and Government Consensus,** March 19-21, 1998, Orlando, FL. **Deadline** for proposals is August 15, 1997.

☎ 800-537-4903 for Guidelines for Submissions

I knew that "whatever" could be death; it could be incarceration. But I knew that something eternal was at stake here.

Decision to Act/Modeling. I decided to find out more about his friends. I wanted to confront them. One time, they were watching the Oprah show, and they had skinheads on. His friends started cheering the skinheads when they spoke. Every time they did that, I would remind them that everyone needs love.

After I said that, I realized that the only way my son and his friends were to know unconditional love was if they saw it through my husband and me. So we began to get to know these kids — both girls and guys. During the next year and a half, as we started to know them as human beings and to show love for them, yet challenge their views and draw boundaries, I found that of 17 skinheads I knew, 14 of them lived in homes where there were no fathers. Of the two who lived with their dads, one father was an active alcoholic, and the other father was hardly ever home. Besides my son, who lived with both parents, there was only one other that lived with both parents.

Most of them had been abused in childhood. I'm convinced that kids get stuck in the grief process at the point of anger. And if we could find a way to unhinge the grief process, we might find a way to heal these kids.

Plan of Action. I began to realize that somebody had to start doing something. I decided to set up a teen center, a youth gang prevention center, where these kids could set aside their colors and insignias, and know that someone cared about them enough to love them, and to challenge them, and to provide a way out of the gangs — if they wanted. At the time I was setting the center up, I realized that it was probably too late for me to reach my son.

After the center got started, Chad faced his second journey to jail. He was placed in a cell with murderers and rapists. He was 16 — with his tattoos and shaved head. He got put in a cell with all black men.

He called me that night and said, "Mother, I am not going to make it if you can't get me out of here."

"Chad, your bail is five thousand dollars," I said. "We don't have five or six hundred dollars right now. I cannot get my hands on that and I am not going to rescue you. I know we need to try to get you out, but changes have to happen in your life. All I can do is pray for you."

The next morning he called from the hospital — his cellmates had beaten him severely and tried to rape him. I found a way to get Chad out and we talked on the way home. That was the beginning of Chad's change. It was his bottom line because he almost lost his life.

Recovery Results. The other big change was finally getting him into an alcohol rehab program that worked, that we could afford. His own background spiritually began to kick in two and a half years ago when he finally made a decision to get out because he realized he was on the wrong side.

Continued on next page

Ideology. As an aside, I'd like to explain how children can be brainwashed. The Klan sends 18-year-old liaisons to recruit in the malls. They look for certain signs in the kids, then they isolate them at meetings and give them scriptural references that "prove" to them that this prejudice is a God-sanctioned thing. When a 13- or 14-year-old is taken out of his environment and his support system, he can be brainwashed.

And so, in some way that I will never understand, Chad thought he was on God's side. That night, two and a half years ago when I got him out of jail, he asked me to read something from the Bible. When I did — and didn't take it out of context — it hit him. He said, "I've been on the wrong side. I can't believe they lied to us." In that moment, he made his change. And he said, "Mom don't pass on any phone calls from any of my friends. I can't talk to them anymore."

He began to drastically change his life. He started going back to church. He didn't associate with any of his friends again, except the three that came out with him when he left the skinheads. We had threats for a year and a half after that.

Unconditional Love. It takes a lot to get out. It takes a lot to break through. I asked him, "Chad, if I had done the kind of 'tough love' on you that I really felt I should have done, and just not let you back in until profound changes had happened in your life, where would you be?"

"I wouldn't be here," he answered. "I guess you did it just about the right way because I needed to know someone loved me unconditionally. And I needed to know I had a place to belong, and I didn't know that back then. I do now."

Summary

Several recurring themes appear in these mothers' stories:

- The importance of communication (e.g., talking with one's child in general and engaging his/her friends in constructive activities specifically).
- The need to listen to and observe a child's actions closely to detect the early signs of alienation or attachment to peers and non-related adults.
- The importance of, and the need for familiarity with, community resources for individual and family counseling and support.
- The acknowledgment that intervention by law enforcement agencies can be helpful.
- The importance of extending oneself to understand other cultures, because they can easily become either friend or foe.
- The importance of developing a plan that is both flexible and comprehensive.
- The need for rudimentary knowledge about how our judicial system works.
- The importance of continuous attention to all the children in one's family so that no child feels that his or her sibling is more important.

The voices of these mothers demonstrate that adolescents being raised in two-parent, educated families are subject to the seductive messages of youth gangs. Their voices also provide effective strategies that any parent can implement immediately. ■

Gwendolyn Cooke is the National Association of Secondary School Principal's director of urban services. Alan McEvoy is a professor at Wittenberg University.

Countering Media Violence: Tools to Define and Teach Media Skills*

In recent months the debate about media violence has widened as discussions about the V-chip, ratings, and other responses have garnered the public's attention. Meanwhile, a continued effort to educate people about media violence has taken place. At the heart of that process is the movement for media literacy. The Center for Media Literacy, based in Los Angeles, has played a key role in this movement by educating people through a wide range of tools, including "Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media," a hands-on curriculum for countering violence in media.

The Center for Media Literacy, based in Los Angeles, has played a key role in this movement by educating people through a wide range of tools, including "Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media," a hands-on curriculum for countering violence in media.

The center's programs are based on the idea that citizens can learn how to be media literate. The process is not about having all the answers — but of learning how to understand media violence and asking questions about it. "We encourage people to be active and inquiring about the media," says Elizabeth Thoman, executive director of the center. She calls the center's work "driver's training for the information superhighway."

The center defines media literacy in three stages: 1) "balancing one's media diet," the fundamental process of "making choices and managing the amount of time" spent with various media; 2) learning specific skills of critical viewing (i.e., what's in a frame, how it's constructed, what was left out), and 3) social, political, and economic analysis which explores issues related to "who produces the media." Who decides what we see? Understanding how mass media works can, according to the center's policy, "set the stage for media advocacy efforts to challenge or redress public policies or corporate practices."

Like many activists working to address the issue of media violence, Thoman discourages blaming other people and institutions for what's on TV or other media. In fact, she says, public discussions created a "circle of blame" about the issue for more than 40 years. Meanwhile, countless well-documented studies released during that time have shown the impact of media violence. The spirit of collective responsibility and commitment to thorough research led to the Beyond Blame Curriculum.

Beyond Blame is designed to reach four age groups through lesson plans and outlines: Elementary level (grades 4-5), Middle

Continued on next page

*Reprinted with permission from *Violence Prevention News*, Vol. 1, no. 12 (Winter 1996-97), published by the Illinois Council for the Prevention of Violence (ICPV), 220 South State Street, Suite 1215, Chicago, IL 60604; 312-986-9200.

(grades 6-8), Teen/Adult Groups (grade 10-adult), and Parents/Caregivers of young children. In addition, the curriculum includes an Introductory/Overview Unit that can be used for a "Town Hall" presentation. The curriculum offers 15 core concepts to help participants define media violence, challenge concepts about role models, explore alternatives, organize for action, and more.

Thoman notes that the prevention community has picked up the idea of media literacy. "It's very encouraging," she says. "Hardly any other curriculum deals with the media's piece of violence prevention. And it's broken down into teachable units."

Last summer, the Center for Media Literacy and the movement to address media violence reached the White House at the "White House Conference on Children's Television." But Thoman and many others emphasize that while increased public attention makes a difference, this is a movement that must take place in homes and communities around the country. The common theme expressed by the center and others working on this issue is "empowerment."

"It's important to talk about what you can do that's positive rather than shaking fingers in people's faces," says Thoman. "This is a community issue. We all have to figure out how we can support parents in providing a healthy cultural environment for their children."

For more information about the Center for Media Literacy and Beyond Blame, call Elizabeth Thoman at (213) 931-4177. Or check out the center's web page at http://www/earthlink.net/~cml. ■

Supplies Donated to Nonprofit Organizations Serving Children

Nonprofit organizations serving the needs of children can receive new, donated supplies at minimal cost through a nationwide corporate gifts program. Donated goods include toys and games, arts and crafts items, office supplies, clothing, computer software and accessories, janitorial supplies, maintenance items, audio and video tapes, books, personal care products, and holiday party supplies.

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Nonprofit directors select what they need from 300-page catalogs issued every 10 weeks. According to the program administrator, recipient groups receive an average of $2,000 worth of goods per catalog. A moneyback guarantee is issued to all new members.

For a free information kit on this 20-year-old nonprofit program, call the **National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources** at:

800-562-0955

Seventh International Conference on Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

Registration • 3:00 – 7:00 p.m. ■ Reception • 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

Opening Session • 8:30 – 9:45 a.m. • Welcoming Remarks

Alan McEvoy, Ph.D., Wittenberg University, Co-chair.

New Directions in Rape Awareness Education

Andrea Parrot, Ph.D., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; and **Jason Dilley,** Artist, San Francisco, CA.

Presentations • 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

1. ***The Use of the Female Body as a Marketing/Advertising Ploy and What Campus Staff and Faculty Can Do About It*** • Joan M. Gibson, Ph.D., State University of New York at Oswego.
2. ***West Point's Educational Approach and Policy on Sexual Harassment*** • Maj. David Jones, United States Military Academy.
3. ***Sexual Harassment from Alpha to Omega and A to Z*** • William D. Berard III, J.D., Gold and Berard, LLP, Niagara Falls, NY; and Gerald N. Calandra, J.D., Fort Worth (TX) Independent School District.
4. ***The "Do-It-Yourself Guide" for Implementing an All-Male Sexual Assault Peer Education Program*** • John D. Foubert and 11 members of an all-male sexual assault peer education group, University of Maryland, College Park.
5. ***Why Students Don't Report Sexual Assaults: Institutional Roadblocks to a Victim's Decision to Come Forward*** • Anne Coleman, Ph.D., and Diane Austin, Northeast College Sexual Assault Network
6. ***Sexual Victimization of Youth: The Office for Victims of Crimes Response*** • Olga Trujillo, Office for Victims of Crime. This session is sponsored by the **Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Dept. of Justice.**
7. ***Peer Education — An Innovative Approach to Date and Acquaintance Rape Prevention in a University*** • Ann Bown, Brock University, Ontario, Canada.

Presentations • 1:00 to 2:15 p.m.

8. ***What Every Student Needs to Know About Sexual Harassment . . . and Many Schools are Afraid to Teach Them*** • Mary Jo McGrath, J.D., McGrath Systems, Inc., Santa Barbara, CA; and William D. Berard III, J.D., Gold and Berard, LLP, Niagara Falls, NY.
9. This session is sponsored by the **Office of Civil Rights, U. S. Department of Education.**
10. This session is sponsored by the **National Interfraternity Conference.**
11. ***A Social Change Approach to Sexual Assault Prevention: Fraternity Men Address the Role of Power Issues*** • Deborah Mahlstedt. Ph.D., Paul Steifel, and Robert Bowen, West Chester University, Westchester, PA.

THURSDAY (Concluded)

12. ***Study of Sexual Harassment Issues in Physical Education and Athletes at Colleges and Universities*** • Ben Valasquez, D.A., University of Southern Mississippi.

13. This session is sponsored by the **U. S. Department of Defense Organization.**

14. ***Sexual Harassment Complaint Resolution: A Decentralized Model*** • Lisa Brodkey, University of California, Davis.

Presentations • 2:30 – 3:45 p.m.

15. ***Avoiding Sexual Harassment: Practical Training in an Education Setting*** • Rosemary G. Layne, Ph.D., Brevard Community College, Cocoa, FL.

16. ***Reporting Sexual Discrimination/Harassment/Sexual Assaults: A Stage Model to Explain Why People Do Not Report or Take So Long To Do So*** • Capt. Ardis Cecil, Ph.D., United States Air Force Academy.

17. ***Sexual Assault Education on a Shoestring*** • Susan Bruce and Jeanne Irwin-Olson, Student Health Center, University of North Carolina, Greensboro.

18. ***Implementing a Sexual Harassment Education Program at Mayo Medical Center*** • Sheila Hicks, Mayo Medical Center, Rochester, MN.

19. ***Date Rape Drugs . . . What Are They?*** • Betsy B. Whetsell, Mona Hunter, Jason Looper, and Jeff Ray, Rape Crisis Council, Pickens, SC.

20. ***Liability and Ethics in Sexual Harassment Complaints*** • Naomi Levine, President, CAASHHE. This session is sponsored by the **Canadian Association Against Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.**

21. ***Unintended Effects of Dealing with Sexual Harassment*** • Stewart Epstein and Jennifer E. Castle, Keuka Park, NY.

Plenary Session • 4:15 – 5:15 p.m.

Effective Sexual Assault Prevention Programming: Meeting the Needs of Men and Women

Alan Berkowitz, Ph.D., Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

Keynote Address • 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Getting in the Schoolhouse Door: Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Organizations in K–12 Schools

Nan Stein, Ed.D., Honorary Conference Co-chair, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College.

FRIDAY (Continued)

Presentations • 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

22. ***Deciding the Truth: Fact Finding and Adjudication of Campus Sexual Assault*** • Alice Vachss, Consultant and former Chief of the Special Victims Bureau, Queens District Attorney's Office, New York, NY.

23. ***Sexual Harassment Complaints: Threats to and Opportunities for the University*** • Geneva Hagedorn, Ed.D., and Bonnie Weisman, J.D., University of Houston (TX).

24. ***A Sexual Assault Response Team Program*** • Chief Kimberly A. Wible, J.D., and Lt. Amelia Borja, San Francisco State University Police.

25. ***Instituting and Enhancing a Peer Theatre Program*** • Susan Bruce, Student Health Center, University of North Carolina, Greensboro; and Steve J. Earle, Longwood College, Virginia.

26. ***Safe Working and Learning Environment Project: A Mandatory, University-Wide Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention Effort*** • Earl Backman, Ph.D., and Julie French-Bloomfield, Northern Arizona University.

27. ***Developing a University/Community Sexual Assault Reporting System That Works!*** • Jeanine Woodruff, Ohio University.

28. ***Gender Neutrality and Compassion: The End to Male-Bashing in Sexual Assault Prevention*** • Capt. Connie Johnmeyer, Ph.D., and 2d Lt. Robert Grant, United States Air Force Academy.

Presentations • 1:00 – 2:15 p.m.

29. ***Betrayal by Persons in Positions of Trust: Survivors' Perspective of Educator Sexual Abuse*** • Mary Ann Werner, Founder, and Donna Covello, President, Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge, Hempstead, NY.

30. ***Culture and the Student's Response to Sexual Assault/Harassment*** • Mary A. Harrell and Maggie Schmid, Montgomery College.

31. This session is sponsored by the **U.S. Department of Defense Organization.**

32. ***The Effect of Computer-Based Training on Knowledge Regarding Sexual Harassment*** • Frank L. Guwagal, Ph.D., Guided Learning Systems, Inc., Hampton, NJ.

33. ***Sexual Assault Response Network: A Town/Gown Coalition*** • Andrea Goldblum, Office of Judicial Affairs, Amy Robertson and Rebecca Brown, Office of Victim Assistance, and Detective Tim DeLaria, Police Department, University of Colorado, Boulder.

34. ***Power of the People: Innovative and Effective Anti-Rape Programming*** • Amy Bandolik, James Madison University and Erin Rivers, California Lutheran University. The session is sponsored by **Speak Out: The National Student Coalition Against Sexual Violence.**

35. This session is sponsored by the **American College Health Association.**

Presentations • 2:30 – 3:45 p.m.

36. ***Confronting Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment*** • Verna Williams, J.D., and Deborah Brake, J.D., National Women's Law Center, Washington, DC.

37. ***Faculty Education Regarding the Prevention of Sexual Violence and Harassment and the Backlash Against This Education*** • Jan Leslie Holtz, Ph.D., College of Saint Benedict (MN).

38. This session is sponsored by the **U.S. Department of Defense Organization.**

39. ***Do Atheletes Know the Score?*** • Suzanne M. Pauwels, Indiana University, Bloomington.

FRIDAY (Concluded)

40. ***The Student Sex Offender — A Mandated Program of Education and Counseling*** • Hillary Wing-Lott, James Madison University (VA).

41. This session is sponsored by the **National Association of Student Personnel Adminstrators.**

42. ***Guidelines for Officers Responding to Sexual Assault*** • Sgt. C. J. Bogart, East Stroudsburg (PA) University Police Dept.

Plenary Session • 4:15 – 5:15 p.m.

Stalking: Promoting Student Safety

Emily Spence Diehl, M.S.W., Victim Advocacy Center,
Florida International University.

Evening Plenary Session • 7:30 p.m.

When a Kiss is Not Just a Kiss

A traveling theater troupe of eight Brown University graduates, who were involved with Brown's Sexual Assault Peer Education Program, and **Toby Simon,** Associate Dean of Student Life.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18

Presentations • 8:45 – 10:00 a.m.

43. ***Silent Crime-Confident Criminal — The Realities of Date Rape*** • Stephan M. Thompson, Central Michigan University.

44. ***Captain Awareness: Assault on Campus*** • Danny DeAngelo, 2-D Graphics, Deland, FL.

45. ***Integrating Masculine Gender Information into Sexual Assault and Harassment Presentations*** • Christopher Kilmartin, Ph.D., Mary Washington College (VA).

46. ***Structuring Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures in a Religious Context*** • Barbara Schaffer, DePaul University, Chicago, IL.

47. ***Laying the Blame . . . Playing the Game: Reaching Greek Men with a Sexual Violence Message*** • Nate Barnett, James Madison University. This session is sponsored by **Speak Out: The National Student Coalition Against Sexual Violence.**

Plenary Session • 10:30 – 12:00 noon

Where to from Here?

This wrap-up panel will address questions and comments from conference attendees on issues relevant to the movement to overcome the insult and trauma of sexual assault.

Seventh Annual International Conference on Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus

Conference Registration Form SAC7

Use one form per person; make additional copies as needed or request them. You may register by phone or FAX, using a credit card, or by mail with a credit card, purchase order, or check. Conference registrants will be confirmed by mail if registrations are received by October 2, 1997. Badges and conference materials will be picked up on site. Please make checks payable to Sexual Assault and Harassment Conference/Safe Schools Coalition.

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This is a preliminary program and is subject to change.

Conference fees: (check appropriate space)

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- ❑ Registration (Sept. 16-Oct. 2)..... $320.00
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A deposit of one night is required to assure a room guarantee. Reservations will be subject to availability, 300 rooms have been reserved for this conference through September 14, 1997. All rooms are subject to state and local taxes.

Make reservations directly with the hotel and be sure to mention the **Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus Conference** to ensure the special room rate.

Early Registration is Recommended

Hear What You Missed

At our conferences we have had sessions audio-taped for the convenience of attendees. Safe Schools Coalition receives no remuneration from this service and does not warrant any tape.

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- *The State's Role in Creating Codes of Discipline*
- *Motivating Defeated Learners: True Alternatives for At-Risk Youth*
- *An Alternative Program for the Fifth through Eighth Grade*
- *School Expulsion and Suspension in Colorado: The Scope of the Problem and What's Working*
- *Enterprise Academy – An Alternative School in a Business/Commercial Community Site*
- *Peer Tutoring among At-Risk Youth: Positive Role Models Really Do Make a Difference*
- *How to Deal with and Respond to Verbal Abuse with Dignity and Respect*
- *Classroom Teaching Strategies that Develop Connections Between Teacher and Students*
- *Equipping Students with the Skills to Succeed – Pennsylvania's Safe Schools Initiative*
- *A Cost-Effective Alternative Education Program that Works*
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- *Developing a Specialized Public School Program for Violent/Acting-Out Students*
- *A C.A.R.E.ing Approach to Violence Prevention*
- *Preventing Dropout by Connecting School to Real Life*
- *No Throw Away Kids: A Timeline for Responsibilities*
- *The Lancaster County Academy – a Dropout Recovery Program*
- *SIP: Suspension Intervention/Prevention Program*
- *Zero Tolerance Policy Requires 100 Percent Enrollment Possibilities*
- *Planning and Implementing an All Male/Female Mentoring Program for At-Risk Youth*
- *Truancy – Multi-Agency Program*
- *An Alternative for the Disengaged Student: Bonding with the School*
- *Conflict Resolution H.E.L.P. (Holistic Educational and Logistical Preparation)*
- *Corps of Cadets: A Positive Alternative*
- *Becoming a Champion*
- *The Making of an Alternative Suspension Model: The Stop Program*
- *Washington Alternative High School: A School for Discouraged or Defeated Learners, Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Their Babies*
- *Take Parents to Truancy Court to Keep Kids in School*
- *Youth Violence in America: Recommendations from the International Association of Chiefs of Police Summit*
- *Jobs Corps' Frenchburg Academy: Keeping At-Risk Youth in School*
- *Gang Resistance Education and Training*
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Call for Guidelines for Presentation or Registration Information

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